

Although this supplemental bill will fund many important priorities, it also includes billions of dollars in wasteful spending while ignoring the very practical, immediate mental health needs of our veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I commend my colleague, Senator AKAKA, for his leadership in amending the original House passed version to include an additional \$430 million to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The \$430 million sum was specifically designed to supplement direct health care, mental health care, and transition services at the VA, but was misguidedly removed by conferees and is no longer present in this final conference report.

To assist our veterans in readjusting to civilian life, the amendment would have included \$80 million for Vet Centers, a readjustment counseling service provided by the VA. Over the years, Vet Centers have provided services to a total of 118,811 Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom veterans. So far this fiscal year, Vet Centers have provided services to 70,547 of these veterans. Unfortunately, this conference report virtually flat-lines the Vet Center budget.

The Senate amendment also included \$168 million for the VA's comprehensive Mental Health Plan. This plan establishes a stronger network of primary and mental health care providers in order to better care for the over one third of our returning veterans who have experienced some sort of readjustment issue.

Finally, the Senate amendment provided \$182 million for the shortfall in service at VA hospitals, where new veterans waiting for their first clinic appointment to be scheduled has doubled this year. Over the course of 2 years, the number of new enrollees waiting for veterans' health care has increased by over 400 percent.

Time after time, we have been told by mental health advocates that the VA's capacity is simply inadequate. Recent studies have shown that 35 percent of Iraq veterans have sought mental health services, with 19.1 percent of Iraq veterans and 11.3 percent of Afghanistan veterans reporting a mental health problem. We must be prepared for the VA to handle this demand.

Our returning men and women in uniform deserve adequate healthcare and transition assistance, which our country promised to them when they volunteered to serve, and is our duty as a nation to provide.

Mr. Speaker, this failure to provide comprehensive assistance for veterans' healthcare should be a wake-up call for those in support of our troops who cannot count on this Administration or the Republican leadership to look out for our veterans needs.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to support the conference report on the Iraq/Afghanistan War. I welcome this chance to especially thank both Speaker HASTERT, along with Chairmen LEWIS and KOLBE for their strong support to also provide aid to the Colombian Navy to fight yet another war against drugs and global terrorism in our own hemisphere.

The bill provides monies to purchase one fully and properly equipped DC-3 Marine Patrol Aircraft (MPA) for maritime interdiction of drugs headed our way. This asset will be utilized by the professional and proven Colombian Navy. This asset will help better monitor and interdict drugs supporting the internal ter-

rorism in Colombia often aimed at Americans, violence along the Mexican border where an estimated 90 percent of the cocaine from Colombia is entering our country, and in our communities.

While in the original House-passed war Supplemental we provided on a strong 250 to 172 bi-partisan vote last March 30th enough monies for at least two properly and fully equipped DC-3s for the MPA function for the Colombian Navy so that they could cover both their Pacific and Caribbean coasts, we know budget limitations became a major factor at the conference.

We also know that one MPA is not enough since the drug traffickers move narcotics north to the USA both from the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. If we cover only one coasts, they will just move their deadly trade to the other coast. We cannot let that happen. We need two Marine Patrol Aircraft.

However, we have assurances from both Appropriations and House leadership staffs that the FY '07 foreign operations FMF monies for Colombia in addition to the plus-up of the aid to the Colombian National Police helicopters, will also obligate the monies for the second MPA for the Colombian Navy. That is good enough for me.

This will get the job done to promptly fill the MPA gap on both the Eastern Pacific and Caribbean with two MPAs, and help get these illicit drugs long before they reach the Mexican border and our communities here at home.

I urge adoption of the conference report.

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I yield back my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 2000

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ROSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)